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ABSTRACT

In fall 1987, a survey of the Chief Academic Officers at 62 State University of New York, City University of New York, and independent two-year colleges identified 102 programs successfully serving students with special needs. Of these programs, a sample of five designed for adults in need of training/retraining was selected for further study. Follow-up investigations sought to determine such information as the program's source of funding, program staff, college type, program objectives and components, clientele demographics, and characteristics of successful participants. Findings, based on interviews of and written reports by 16 two-year college staff members, included the following: (1) all five of the programs received financial support from both the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act as well as their college, while only two programs received additional funds from outside agencies and/or fees; (2) all of the programs provided counseling, advising, and testing services; (3) 50% of program participants were between 41 and 50 years of age; (4) 62.5% of the participants were enrolled part-time or took an occasional course, while 37.5% were enrolled full-time; (5) the most common reason given for enrolling in credit courses was to "upgrade employability potential"; and (6) characteristics of successful participants included continued job development or financial advancement over time, a personal sense of achievement, self-assurance, and becoming involved in college activities. (ALB)

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SUMMARY PROFILE:

SELECTED PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS IN NEED OF TRAINING/RETRAINING IN POSTSECONDARY OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

Two-Year College Development Center
University at Albany, State University of New York

in cooperation with

Bureau of Grants Administration
New York State Education Department

Winter 1988

JC 890 300

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SUMMARY PROFILE: SELECTED PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS IN NEED OF TRAINING/RETRAINING IN POSTSECONDARY OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

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The Carl D. Perkins Act has served as a stimulus for two-year colleges to initiate or offer expanded program and service alternatives to better serve the special needs populations of disadvantaged, disabled, single parents/homemakers, returning adults, criminal offenders and individuals encountering sex bias/stereotyping. Concerns are often expressed by those considering allocation of funds set aside for these special populations regarding successful program components. In order to respond to these and related concerns, the Two-Year College Development Center, University at Albany, in cooperation with the Bureau of Grants Administration, New York State Education Department, undertook a research project designed to identify two-year college programs that successfully serve one or more of the designated populations and to determine relationships between program components/strategies and the needs of a specific clientele.

To identify a pool of programs that serve the special needs populations, a survey was distributed during the initial phase to Chief Academic Officers at 62 State University of New York, City University of New York and independent two-year colleges. The survey was developed to identify local efforts which the respective colleges found worthy of being shared with others. A response rate of 65.5% resulted in 102 efforts for special needs populations. These were compiled into a publication, A Compendium of Postsecondary Programs that Serve Special Needs Populations, Fall 1987, and distributed statewide.

The 102 entries also served as a database for consideration of programs for indepth study of the relationship of need and strategy. Using selection

criteria of frequency, scope, reported effectiveness, and information availability, Single Parents/Homemakers was the first population designated for further study, and Learning Disabled the second. Results were compiled in documents titled, Summary Profile: Single Parents/Homemakers in Postsecondary Occupational Education and Summary Profile: Programs to Support Learning Disabled Students in Postsecondary Occupational Education. Both publications were distributed statewide.

During the second project phase, the population of Adults in Need of Training/Retraining was selected for further study. Five sites offering programs or services were selected as research sites: Corning Community College, Kingsborough Community College, Niagara County Community College, Tompkins-Cortland Community College and Westchester Community College. Collection of detailed data at each site utilized interviews of program staff (N=16) and clientele (N=16) plus written responses to information sheets. Following staff and clientele interviews at each of the five sites, a descriptive summary was shared with the program coordinator to verify information and to share clientele input.

After appropriate revisions, each program was outlined using a standard format that provided detail regarding number of clients, funding source, staffing, college type, program objectives, functions, components, success evidence plus clientele demographics, needs, recommendations as well as characteristics of successful participants. These outlines served as the information base for this report.

The purpose of this publication is to summarize data that may be useful to others involved in programs for adult students, and to portray the relationship of population needs to program activities based on data collected and their outcomes.

Dr. LaVerna M. Fadale
Project Director

We wish to express our appreciation to the 32 program staff members and participants who so willingly cooperated with our data collection. In particular, we wish to thank the five program coordinators who arranged and coordinated the data collection session at their respective colleges: Ann M. DeMember, Corning Community College; Naomi Platt, Kingsborough Community College; Ralph L. Klicker, Niagara County Community College; Nancy Lieberman, Tompkins-Cortland Community College; and Linda Gilberto, Westchester Community College. This study was made possible through the cooperation of these individuals and their colleges.

I. Perspective

QUESTION: *When is an adult not an adult?*

ANSWER: *Never, but an adult can also be a single parent, physically or learning disabled, disadvantaged, unemployed, a victim of sex bias, a returnee to college or incarcerated.*

Adults in need of training or retraining, unlike the special populations previously studied by this project, is an inclusive rather than exclusive term. A single parent is also an adult. Many, if not all, disadvantaged students are adults; in fact, many if not all students in two-year colleges can be considered adults. Colleges that recruit persons from the community for programs offering occupational training opportunities will attract adult students who may have one or more special needs beyond skill training. Yet, it would be illogical to exclude a single parent from a training program designed for adults and then try to enroll them in another program specifically for single parents. In fact, colleges attract many adults with one or more special needs. When this occurs, staff strive to link people to additional resources to help them overcome their particular problems.

Essentially every two-year college offers some training opportunities, credit or non-credit, job-specific and/or industry-specific or generic skills that are applicable to a variety of work situations. Because of the broadness of the common universe of programs for adults, choosing a sample for study became difficult. Although the number of programs for adults is vast, many are unique in several respects. All however address the needs of adults for education and/or training and, taken as a whole, reflect the wide-reaching diversity of the population and its needs. The following five adult training programs were selected as the sample, and serve a range of diverse functions as indicated:

1. Award credit for prior learning/experience---

   Since it is recognized that learning takes place in many aspects of life outside the classroom, some of what is learned can be applied to a degree through portfolio, challenge exams, standardized college equivalency exams or military experience.

2. Address social, personal and vocational needs of older adults in retirement and preretirement stages---

   Help older/retired adult clients sell themselves and their skills through vocationally oriented non-credit courses, peer teaching peer activities, and career development seminars.

3. Promote retention and mainstreaming of GED recipients enrolled in career programs through orientation, support and academic services---

   An interdisciplinary approach (team teaching) in a seminar setting addresses such topics as career exploration, academic survival skills, stress, mental health, math/science anxiety, nutrition, public policy, among others.

4. Increase awareness of opportunities and facilitate entry of adults into collegiate career programs---

   Services are offered to help adults meet the challenges of obtaining a degree including financial aid counseling, tutoring in the Learning Skills Center, "How to Study" courses, day care for children at a reasonable cost, bus service to campus, day and evening class schedules, off-campus locations, career and personal counseling, resume and job interview preparation, and listing of current job openings.

5. Provide training in selected career area(s) to upgrade skills and effectiveness of employees in the community---

   A series of training workshops are provided for targeted employment areas to upgrade and certify skills. Workshop topics are based on assessments to determine what is appropriate to the service area.

The purpose of this report is to present information regarding these different approaches, particularly as related to the use of Perkins Act funds, to assist other colleges undertaking similar educational offerings. It should be noted that the word "program" can be somewhat misleading. In several instances efforts are geared toward coordination of services and/or facilitating entry into existing courses or programs.

II. Adults in Need of Training/Retraining Need-Program Typology

The literature suggests that adult needs usually fall into four general need categories: vocational, social, personal and/or academic. Depending on the community served, programs or services for adults usually assume various foci and formats to correspond to the appropriate need(s) of adult subgroup(s). These often include counseling and referral services, career and college information, skill training and assistance in entering and persevering in degree career programs. Each of the programs studied address elements of one or more clientele need categories as illustrated by the following summary of intents and roles.

A. Intent -

To acknowledge prior learning through credit award

Roles -

- Coordinate procedures to achieve assessment of previous knowledges and experiences
- Provide assistance, information and referral to aid in problem-solving

B. Intent -

To help adults "sell" their skills and themselves

Roles -

- Offer noncredit courses for skill upgrade or for enrichment
- Offer an interpersonal activity designed to stimulate and promote self-development, growth and positive associations

C. Intent -

To promote retention through maximizing support and academic services

Roles -

- Provide an understanding contact and orientation to services
- Hold seminars structured as team-taught interdisciplinary experiences to provide a base of success and peer support
- Provide information and support as needed through counseling, advising and peer support groups
- Provide information about the college, its programs and traditions to help promote individual socialization as appropriate
- Provide tutoring and workshops to upgrade academic skills

D. Intent -

To increase access information and awareness of available services and programs to adults

Roles -

- Hold seminars in community to provide information and facilitate recruitment
- Network with agencies and encourage on-site presentations to provide information and facilitate recruitment and referrals
- Reduce anxiety and help individuals' transition into a collegiate atmosphere, provide counseling and advising as appropriate

E. Intent -

To upgrade skills through training within a career area

Roles -

- Hold training workshops structured to reflect needs of community
- Implement a needs assessment as appropriate and maintain networking with professionals, employers and agencies
- Maintain an up-to-date collection of resource materials and sources
- Provide advising and counseling services

Recommendations regarding program implementation and staffing of efforts for adults in need of training/retraining are subsequently summarized:

1a. Staff Recommendations to Others Undertaking Similar Programs:

Prior experience credit -

- Plan to work closely with faculty and be able to provide support/stipends for their development opportunities
- Staff should be available to adult students at times other than regular hours
- Expect to assume the roles of advocate and ombudsman

Career skill training -

- Work and cooperate with local councils and agencies
- Develop an advisory group representing community, college and consumers with an interest in targeted area
- Plan to implement a strong publicity campaign apropriate to the targeted population
- Facilitate networking to help recruit effective instructors/ presenters
- Try to build training on related credit offerings within the college

Increased retention (particularly GED recipients) -

- Identify the targeted students, and require a freshman experience section
- Provide counseling prior to admission
- If a student needs to reduce course load, maintain enrollment in at least one regular degree course for a link with the college

Increased awareness of opportunities -

- Work with faculty so that students will receive necessary personal attention
- Recognize that administrative support is crucial
- Attention to building positive attitudes with students
- Coordinator must be a talented, committed person

Older adults (retirement/preretirement) -

- Understand the structure of the college before beginning program, and know how it fits fiscally and philosophically
- Planning time is needed internally as well as externally in order to see how it relates to the rest of the college -- a major difference between success and failure
- Recognize that this is nothing more than a business which is selling education
- Recognize that it is a service, and time must be allowed to provide good service

Older adults (retirement/preretirement) (continued) -

- Recognize that older adults have time to spend and will spend it in order to accomplish their goals

- Maintain flexibility and an ability to change and adjust

1b. Client Recommendations for Adult Programs:

Prior experience credit -

- Schedule registration for evening hours to avoid conflict with work

- Offices with which students must deal should be open evenings

- Increase number of courses open for challenge/experience credit

- Expand evening course curriculum

- Provide advising services in the evening

- Provide some social/support organizations for returning adults

- Increase number of credits obtainable through portfolio/challenge

Career skill training -

- Link training to credit courses

- Expand to accommodate greater numbers

Increased retention -

- Offer ongoing peer support group or other similar technique

Increased awareness of opportunities -

- Provide informal study area designated for adults to allow interaction among peers

Older adults -

- Increase number of classes offered

- Add classes appropriate for the "over 50"

- Increase extent of advertising

2. General Recommendations for Staff Qualifications:

- Be flexible and innovative
- Possess skills in management, organization, coordination and interpersonal relationships
- Instructors must be skilled in their content area(s)

III. Data Summary Profile

Program Profile

The 16 staff members provided data and information through interviews, written materials and reports about their respective programs. The sample of adult-focused efforts addressed a range of needs as appropriate to targeted clients including prior experience/knowledge, retention, recruitment/awareness, and skills training. The programs illustrate the diversity of services and activities that are available to adults at the two-year colleges in New York State whether the institution is large or small, rural or metropolitan.

Because of the distinct focus of the five sample efforts, data are coded to each program as indicated below:

Key - 1 = Prior Learning
2 = Older Adults
3 = Support and Orientation
4 = Awareness of Opportunities
5 = Skills Training

A. Operational Definitions of Adult Students:

- Individuals with adult responsibilities (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Individuals using adult service (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Individuals seeking specific kinds of support and/or activity (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

B. Major Objectives of Sample Programs:

- To acknowledge prior learning through credit awards (1)
- To help adults "sell" their skills and themselves (2)
- To promote retention through maximizing support and academic services (3)
- To provide information and awareness of services and programs available to adults (4)
- To upgrade skills through training within a career area (5)

C. Program Funding Sources:

100% Partial support from Perkins-VEA (, 2, 3, 4, 5)
Range - approximately $10,000 - $15,000

100% Partial support from college budget (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

40% Partial support from outside agencies and/or fees (2, 5)

D. Numbers Served:

Range - 15 to 596 students per year (dependent on program purpose)

E. Primary Position Within College:

60% Community Service, Extended Learning (1, 2, 5)

20% Academic Affairs (3)

20% Student Affairs, usually Admissions (4)

F. Program/Service Function:

	Program/Service -				
Functions -	Prior Learning	Older Adults	Support & Orient	Opport. Awareness	Skills Training
Assessment of experience	70%	-	-	-	-
Information, referrals	20%	-	-	-	12.5%
Counseling, advising, testing	10%	10%	15%	20%	10%
Instruction	-	90%	80%	-	70%
Recruitment	-	-	5%	80%	-
Evaluation	-	-	-	-	7.5%
TOTAL -	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

G. Most Valuable Resource of Sample Programs:

- College personnel---coordinator, financial aid staff, faculty, consultants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Advertising and recruitment materials (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Peers---interaction, feedback and networking (2, 3, 4, 5)
- Cooperating community agencies (5)
- Support within college structure (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Materials (3, 4, 5)

H. Evidence of Program Success:

- Number of students who matriculate to regular/career programs, continue education (1, 3, 4)
- Number of referrals made to program/service (1, 2, 3, 4)
- Student feedback to activities (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Faculty ratings (1, 5)
- Extent of application of skills to work situation (5)
- Numbers who qualify for reduced course load (1)

I. Continuing Program Needs of Sample Programs:

- To have services available during evening classes (1, 5)
- To have a greater variety of courses (particularly those that are content-heavy) at times other than during day schedules (1, 4)
- To have capability of offering college credit for career skill training (5)
- To increase support to allow expansion to better meet scope of need in region (2, 4, 5)
- To adjust those college regulations that essentially serve as barriers to adults in credit courses (1, 4)

Clientele Profile

The 16 adult students representing the five programs shared information through interviews and questionnaires.

A. Demographic Profile of Interviewed Clients*:

(N=16)

Age Range -

21-30	18.8%
31-40	12.4%
41-50	50.0%
Over 50	18.8%

*Summarizes clientele demographics of all five sample programs.

Gender -

Male	31.2%
Female	68.8%

Status -

Single	18.8%
Married	56.2%
Divorced/ Separated	25.0%

Employment Status -

Part-time	31.2%
Full-time	18.8%
Not employed/ Retired	50.0%*

Student Status -

Part-time, occasional course	62.5%
Full-time	37.5%

Program Enrollment -

General studies	31.3%
Periodic noncredit courses	31.3%
Human Services	12.5%
Periodic credit courses	12.5%
Fine and Applied Arts	6.2%
Travel and Tourism	6.2%

B. Why Enrolled:

Credit Courses -

- Location, close to home (1, 4)
- Acquire degree because of realization of need for higher education (1, 3)
- Career advancement (1)
- Cost, inexpensive (1, 4)
- Credit for knowledge of field through work experience (1)
- Personal interest, increase knowledge, refocus efforts (3, 5)
- Upgrade employability potential (3, 4, 5)
- College inviting, encouraging (3, 4)

*Percentage of not employed/retired is due to program emphasis at one site.

Noncredit Courses -

- Originally for personal interest (2)
- Seeking employment and improvement of work skills (2)
- Reached point in life where changes were needed (2)
- Recommended by friend (2)
- Program publicity - ad, brochure (2)

C. Major Needs:

- To reduce anxiety related to college attendance (4)
- To acquire coping skills for dealing with non-academic environments and families, for example a hostile spouse or companion (4)
- To upgrade skills and knowledges in career field (5)
- To develop networks among personnel in field (5)
- To have access to quality training programs that provide an appropriate knowledge base (5)
- To upgrade academic skills (4)
- To have opportunities for career exploration (3, 4)
- To be aware of and able to access support systems (i.e., advising, financial direction) (3, 4)
- To overcome a sense of isolation (3)
- To develop greater self-confidence (2, 3)
- To expand interests and alternative activities (4)
- To meet new challenges and ideas (2, 3, 4)
- To gain a sense of achievement/motivation (1)
- To clarify personal goals (2)
- To access professional guidance (2)
- To be oriented to college at first registration (2)
- To recognize the increasing importance of life experiences and self-learning as an individual ages (2)

D. Most Used Resources/Activities:

- Financial aid information and advisement (4)
- Testing, assessment and career information (2)
- Peer contacts and interaction (5, 2)
- Support of college personnel (4, 5)
- Flexibility of professors and their willingness to help (3, 4)
- Tutoring, academic skills workshops/labs (3, 4)
- Opportunities for enrichment and improvement (2)
- Credit for experience/prior learning (1)

IV. Summary of Characteristics of Successful Adult Students

Staff and clients identified the characteristics of individuals who had participated in the respective programs, and attained some degree of success. Although the programs within the same differed, most of the following characteristics of successful adult students have applicability across the range of efforts for adults in need of training/retraining.

Staff -

- Motivated
- A view of self as a learner capable of growth and flexibility
- A perspective that education opens windows
- An acquired self-confidence, and willingness to seek opportunities to contribute
- Matriculate, take charge of own lives and continue college program
- A sense of professionalism, active in field

Clients -

- Continued job development, growth, and financial advancement over time
- Personal sense of achievement, satisfaction and stimulation
- A belief that one can do new things and recognize opportunities, everyone is a success who has courage to do new things, determined, skilled in time management, flexible
- Know importance of education and be willing to delay working/ gratification until completed, be willing to put up with a lot
- Self-assured and willing to take a challenge, a sense of humor
- Setting a goal and seeking to achieve it, diligence of pursuit
- Becoming involved in college activities

V. Summary of Conclusions

The following statements serve as a summary of the outcomes of this study of adults in need of training/retraining.

- Adults in need of training or retraining may have special needs beyond occupational training because they can also be single parents, physically or learning disabled, disadvantaged, unemployed, a victim of sex bias, a returnee to college or incarcerated.

- Every two-year college offers in some measure credit/noncredit training opportunities, job and/or industry specific or generic skills applicable to a range of work situations.

- The word "program" may be misleading in the adult context since most efforts focus on coordinating and facilitating entry to existing courses or programs.

- Adult needs can be broadly categorized as vocational, social, personal and academic. Illustrative of specific needs found within one or more of the categories are the needs to:

  - have access to quality occupational training upgrading (vocational)

  - develop networks within field (social, vocational)

  - develop greater self-confidence (social, personal)

  - gain a sense of achievement (personal)

  - upgrade academic skills (academic)

- Operational definitions of adults include individuals with adult responsibilities, who use adult services and who seek specific support or activity.

- In addition to college and Perkins funds, several programs have partial support from fees or outside agencies/sources.

- Counseling, advising and testing activities are elements most often found in adult programs.

- College personnel in a variety of roles are viewed by participants as the most valuable resource.

- The age range encompassed by adults to be served is an important consideration since the needs and wants of a 30-year old differ substantially from those of a 55-year old.

- Adults are constantly changing which has implications for planning programs and services.

- Three questions are usually raised by adult students interested in career programs:

  1) Will I be able to get a job upon completion?

  2) How will I pay for college?

  3) Who will help me after I come?

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